

# Social Media, Libraries, and Web 2.0: How American Libraries are Using New Tools for Public Relations and to Attract New Users – Third Survey November 2010

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# Overview

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## How are American libraries using Web 2.0 applications and social networking tools to promote their library programs and services?

Many libraries are using them voraciously, some still not at all. However, we cannot ignore the ever-increasing use of these tools to connect with library users. Statistics such as these illustrate we can no longer ignore the usefulness of these tools.

- *Almost one in 10 (8%) American adults who use the internet are Twitter users, according to a new survey from the Pew Internet & American Life Project.<sup>1</sup>*
- *Between October 2009 and October 2010, Facebook increased its unique visitor total almost 22%, from about 109.7 million to 133.5 million. Compared to September 2010, Facebook grew its unique visitor total 2% from 130.8 million.<sup>2</sup>*
- *While overall social networking use by online American adults has grown from 35% in 2008 to 61% in 2010, the increase is even more dramatic among older adults, according to new data from the Pew Research Center. In particular, the rate of online social networking approximately quadrupled among Older Boomers (9% to 43%) and the GI Generation (4% to 16%).<sup>3</sup>*

This survey represents feedback from a wide variety of library staff members in the U.S. to determine how libraries are employing Web 2.0 and social networking tools to promote library programs and services. The first survey took place between March 14 and March 21, 2009 to gather data for a paper that was presented at the 2009 German Library Association Annual Conference in Erfurt, Germany (Deutscher Bibliothekartag 2009 June 2-5

<http://www.bibliothekartag2009.de/>). The original paper with first survey results is published online via Slideshare:

<http://www.slideshare.net/crr29061/social-media-libraries-and-web-20-how-american-libraries-are-using-new-tools-for-public-relations-and-to-attract-new-users>

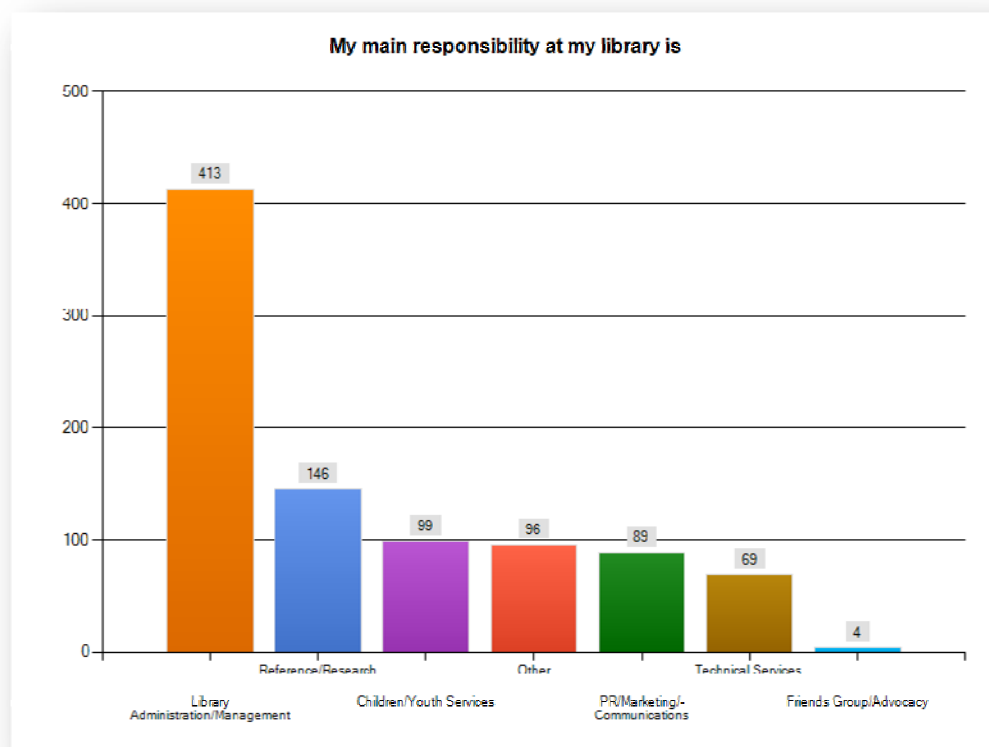
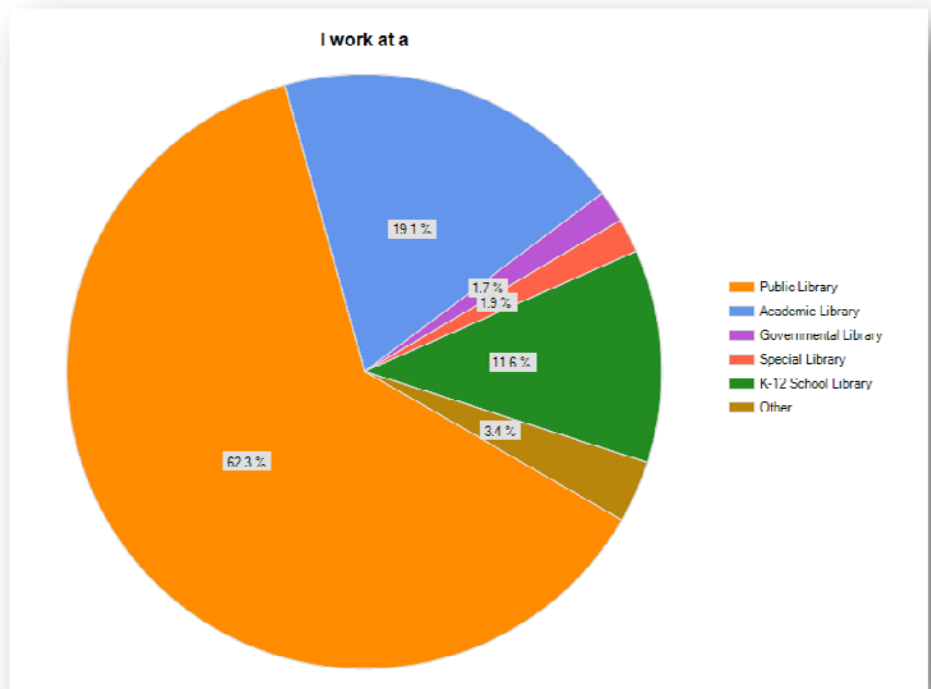
The second survey took place from November 12 to November 25, 2009. The results are published online at [http://www.statelibrary.sc.gov/docs/social\\_media\\_survey2009.pdf](http://www.statelibrary.sc.gov/docs/social_media_survey2009.pdf).

This report presents the survey results from the third survey which ran from November 1 to November 17, 2010.

# Survey Results

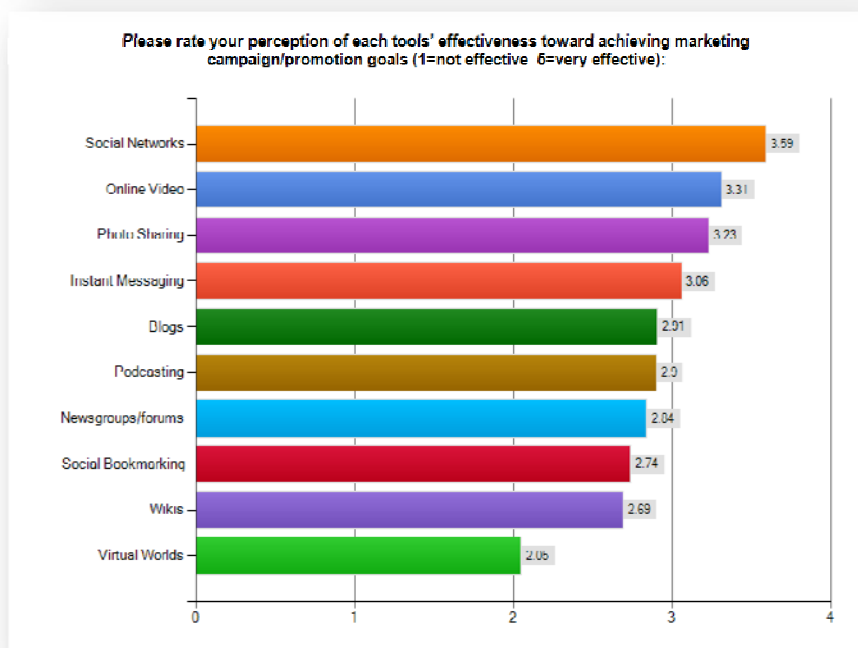
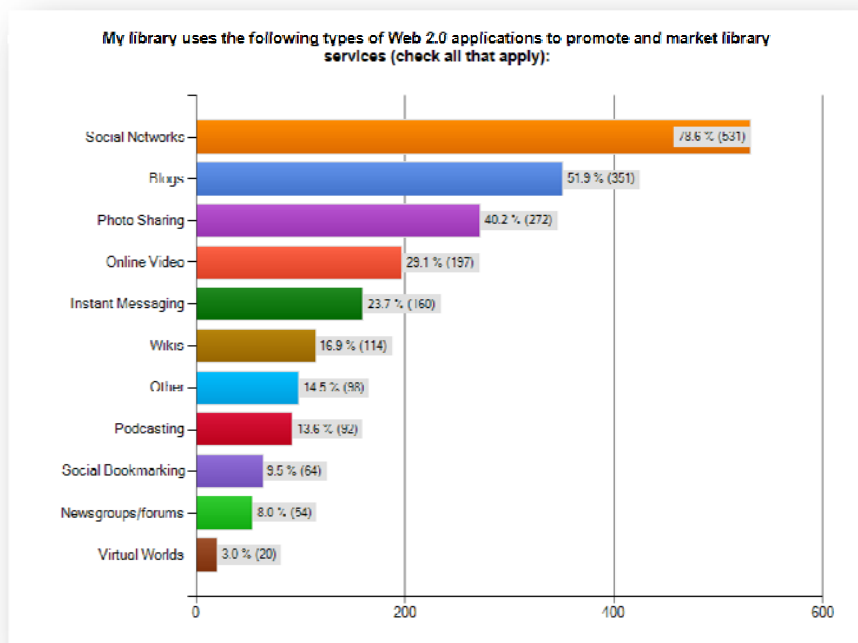
A total of 917 individuals began the survey with 664 completing it. 62.3% of respondents represented public libraries and 19.1% represented academic libraries. The majority of respondents (413 – 45.1%) reported their main responsibility at work is in the library administration/ management area. 146 (15.9%) of the respondents reported their main responsibility at work was in reference and/or research area.

Other responses came from individuals who work in children/youth services (10.8%), public relations/marketing/communications (9.7%), and technical services (7.5%). For this survey, the category of friends group/advocacy was added with .4% responding. One respondent suggested Circulation should be added as a category in next year's survey.



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Out of 676 respondents to the question, "My library uses the following types of Web 2.0 applications to promote and market library services," social networks (78.6%) and blogs (51.9%) remained the two highest responses on the list. Many libraries continue to use photo sharing tools (40.2%) as



well as online video (29.1%). Virtual worlds continue to be reported as the least used.

Respondents also rated their perception of each tools' effectiveness toward achieving marketing campaign and/or promotion goals. On a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being very effective and 1 being not effective, respondents continued to rank social networks as the highest with an average of 3.59. Coming in second was online video with an average ranking of 3.31. Both of these items were slightly higher than the 2009 survey responses.

An overwhelming number of responses (92.2%) to the question, "Do you think Web 2.0 tools are important for marketing and promoting library services?" continued to respond positively with only 7.8% stating they did not think Web 2.0 tools were important. 159 respondents provided qualitative information in the form of detailed comments.

The following are selected responses representing a broad spectrum of how respondents feel about using these tools to promote library services:

*Effectiveness in 2.0 depends entirely on who's following or paying attention to you.*

*These tools are increasingly used by more and more people, so libraries need to utilize them effectively.*

*As the world gets more and more mobile and interconnected, libraries need to keep pace.*

*As the world becomes increasingly virtual, to promote the library we have to take this idea into consideration.*

*I believe Web 2.0 tools will only become more important in the future not only for marketing library services but to monitor what others are saying about our libraries and library services. With so many venues for people to comment, it is critical to be trolling and listening for their comments. These are users who may not choose to visit the library to complete a paper form or interact with the library website to complain or comment, but feel comfortable doing so on foursquare or twitter.*

*There are certain essential media that need to be a part of just about any marketing/PR campaign. Web 2.0 tools have quickly been added to this list.*

*Very much so. However, social media is currently not being used in the most effective way possible in my library. Although the marketing/pr director recognizing the reach SM can have, another group in the library 'owns' the library's SM accounts and, to this point, that group has not used SM to engage in a two-way conversation.*

*This is how people communicate today and if Library's want to remain relevant, then they need to join the conversations.*

*Everyone is online or using mobile devices... A library has to be in tune with what is happening with their patrons and meet them there.*

*I think \*some\* Web 2.0 tools are important for promoting library services. It's important to have a presence where our patrons "live" but things like virtual worlds, that aren't widely used, aren't the best use of our time and resources.*

*We need to use all available sources to reach our customer base. Most of our customers are using web 2.0 resources so we should be where our customers are.*

*To stay relevant to people today, we need to go where they are - this is true of any business, including libraries.*

*People now expect libraries to use technology to find them rather than their having to always seek out the library.*

*Our library is located in a small rural community, so many of our patrons are not tech savvy. I think it*

*depends on the community you serve as to how effective these tools can be.*

*I think any kind of marketing and outreach in 2010 has to involve technology - "Web 2.0" is a very 2000 concept and as usual, libraries are a decade behind.*

*Libraries are expected by patrons to keep up with Web2.0 tools. If Libraries don't patrons may go elsewhere to fulfill their expectations.*

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#### **Some responses mentioned their access to these useful promotional tools is still being blocked:**

*However - we are a county system and we have to adhere to the Internet policy developed by the county's IT dept., which has effectively eliminated the possibility of the library using any sort of Web 2.0 tools.*

*They would be helpful but we are not permitted to use them.*

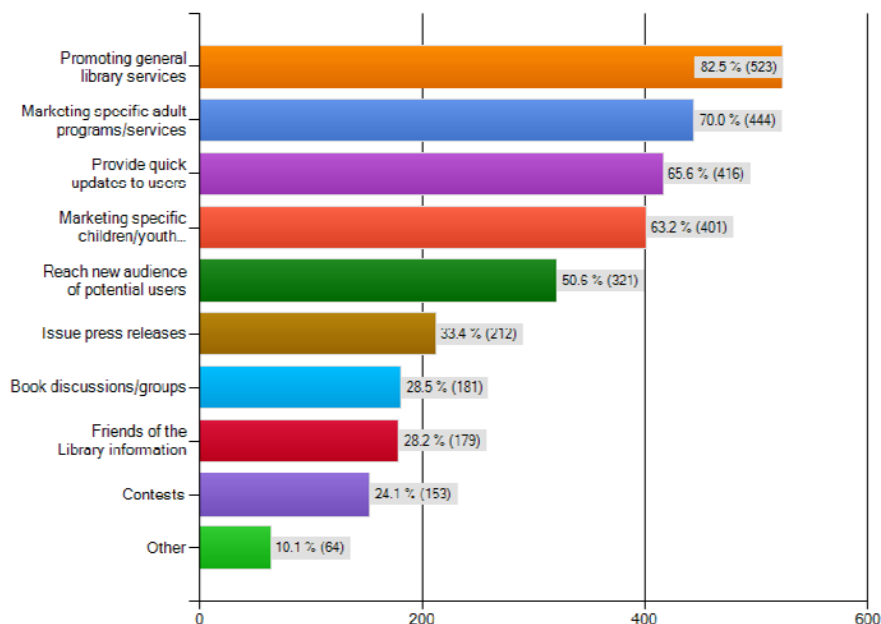
*I think they are important and would love to use them, but most of them have been blocked by our school network in the past so I can't use them.*

*It's important to consider your audience. If I were in a public library, I would use a lot more web 2.0, especially to reach younger people. In my library, many web 2.0 tools are blocked for my primary clientele, so not as valuable.*

*We haven't access to social websites due to the City's robust firewall.*

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**What does your library use Web 2.0 tools for? (check all that apply)**



Respondents from libraries that have already implemented Web 2.0 tools predominantly use them for promoting general library services 82.5% (77.7% in 2009). Other highly ranked uses for Web 2.0 tools show an overall increase in use from last year's survey:

- Marketing specific adult programs and/or services 70% (60.3% in 2009)
- Marketing specific children's and/or youth services programs 63% (56.8% in 2009)
- Providing quick updates to users 65.6% (56.8% in 2009)
- Reaching a new audience of potential users 50.6% (48.7% in 2009)

The following are selected comments (from a total of 69) regarding how respondents' libraries are using Web 2.0 tools:

*Spreading the word about other community organizations' events/promos; BUILDING COMMUNITY!!*

*Connect the library to current events so people know the library is a place that is current.*

*Updates on new research tools (tutorials, guides, databases, new books)*

*Tweet & blog "behind the scenes" news and observations in order to show our friendly, helpful attitude toward serving the public.*

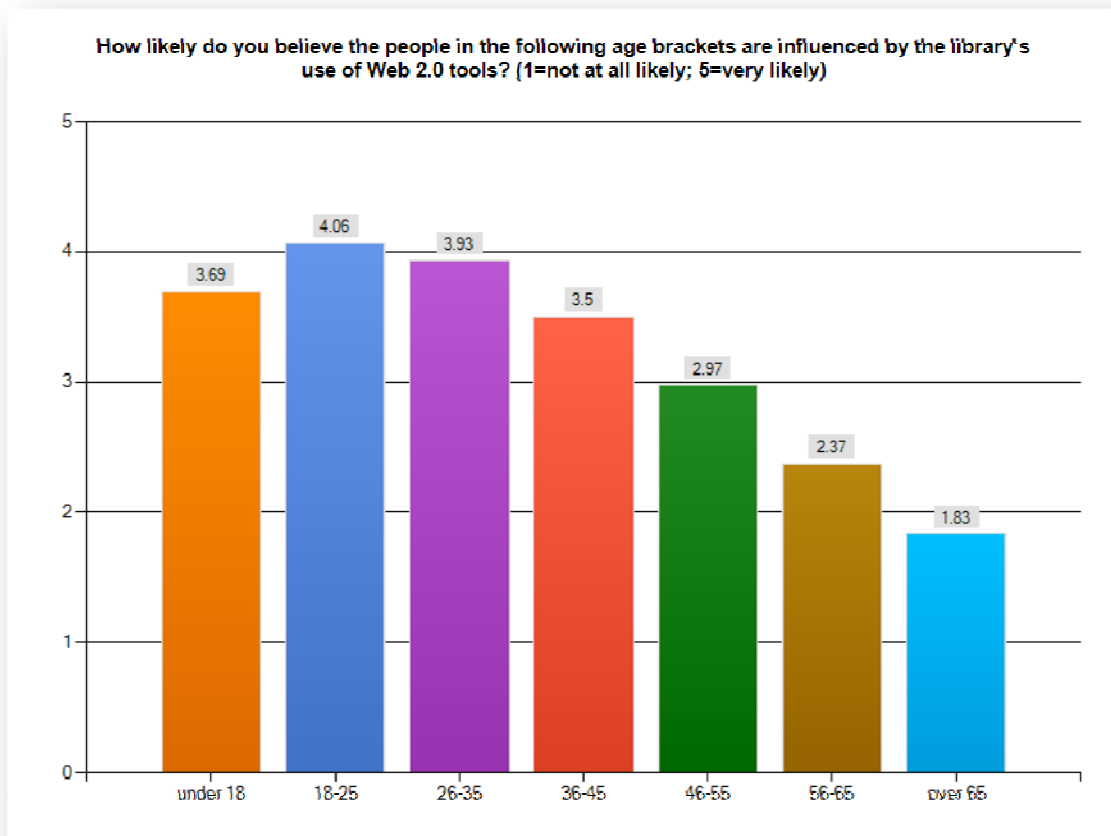
*We include links to community events and articles on technology that may be of interest to our customers.*

*We try and engage with our social media friends/customers. One way of doing this is to ask for input on a topic, another way that we have found effective is to ask a general question to get conversation going on a certain topic.*

*Encourage donations and support.*

*Provide information about medical information, update progress of info commons.*

Respondents were asked, “How likely do you believe the people in the following age brackets are influenced by the library’s use of Web 2.0 tools?” The majority responded they perceived individuals 18-25 were the most likely to be influenced with 26-35 and under 18 ranking second and third mirroring the 2009 survey responses.



Respondents were also asked to provide success stories with their library’s use of social media or Web 2.0 tools for promoting the library’s services and events. Below are selected responses from the 90 received:

*We’ve been able to respond to questions and general customer service type issues such as reserves or email notifications not working. People are asking us more and more questions through these tools. We’ve also been able to connect with customers. For example, we had one of our followers on Twitter mention that they just became a father. We responded and said congratulations it’s never too early to start reading to your son. We then asked our “fans” on Facebook for book suggestions for infants and provided him a link to our Facebook page*

*that included several options for him. The customer was very appreciative and thanked everyone on Facebook for the ideas.*

*We are still in the midst of our aha moments. We realized the benefits of social media tools such as lowered production costs, better and faster distribution of newsletter, programming and public announcement information. But we also realize that we have only scratched the surface of what these tools can really do for library services!*

***People have come into the library for a program and say, "I didn't know you did things like this, but I saw it on Facebook and just had to come." We see people "friending" the library who haven't visited us in years and now, because of Web 2.0, are coming back.***

*We used an online video via email to tell our 'story' to patrons in early 2008 and it ultimately led to a passage of a 1.5 million dollar bond issue for a complete renovation of our library. We moved back into our "new and improved" old library in the fall of 2009.*

*We're getting a lot of feedback via twitter and Facebook - patrons asking questions about services, ref questions, etc. We're having fun connecting with our community.*

*We track website statistics using Google Analytics for all three of our websites. Not only does Google Analytics provide useful data on our most popular pages but it also tracks traffic from other sources. One of the interesting things we have noticed is that the teen Facebook page is generating traffic to the teen site, more so than our main site Facebook or kids Facebook. It provides validation of our efforts to post daily and informs us that teens (at least in our area) are heavier Facebook users than MySpace users.*

*We've used our Second Life library as a presentation site for a KLA workshop on greening your library, avoiding the cost of fossil fuels for a trip from Olathe to Wichita for a 1-hour presentation*

*Sadly our municipal government is fearful of social networking like Facebook because they believe they are liable for anything posted and our patrons really want this connection with our library. The "aha" would be more in the*

*negative towards our government for preventing this library standard from being used because of liability.*

*When we post a question on Facebook, such as "What are you reading right now?" we get great feedback and it creates a feeling of community and interaction between our fans.*

*The blog is especially useful when we want a soft introduction of a new product or service. It reaches a few which allows us to ramp up/work out bugs without being inundated.*

*When we hosted an exhibit and workshops relating to veterans artwork we had tremendous feedback from the "chatter" on the blogs and other 2.0 sites related to veterans affairs. In other words, don't underestimate the positive possibilities of getting your announcements and information out on 2.0/blogs/etc. that are focused on very specific audiences or very specific projects.*

*I think Facebook is a great way for the community to communicate back with you. I had a parent that said too bad the storytime wasn't later because the kids don't get off the bus till 3 so I moved storytime. I had no idea that the buses ran so late.*

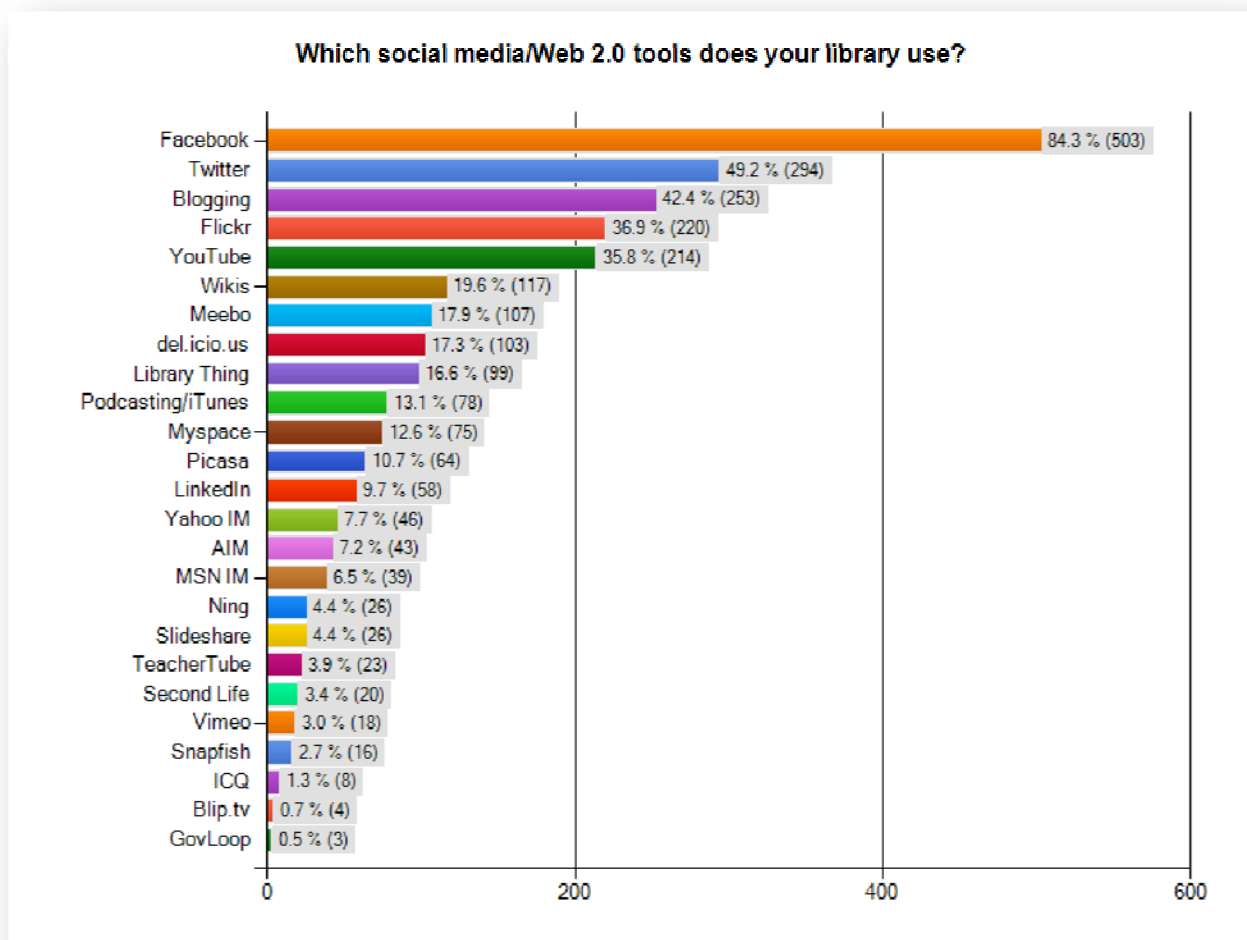
*Twitter is a great tool for reminding the media about an event. They already have the press release, so when I send a tweet the day of they are reminded to come cover the story. We have received coverage many times because of this.*

***I put out a call on Facebook for adult volunteers for an afternoon program that were had trouble finding help for - I had a response within minutes.***



Many of these responses illustrate that if social media and Web 2.0 tools are used effectively, they can produce many positive outcomes.

Respondents were also asked to choose from a list of 25 Web 2.0 and social media tools their library uses. The tool most widely used was Facebook at 84.3% (74.7% in 2009). Twitter moved into second place (third place in 2009) with 49.2% and blogging tools came in third with 42.4%.



This question had 65 comments posted listing other related resources being used by libraries.

Selected comments:

*We have stopped using MySpace as it does not generate interest or traffic among our teens. We did invest time into creating podcasts and online book reviews but have not maintained these projects due to the lack of benefit for the amount of time involved in creating them.*

*Internal messaging (pidgin and jabber). We use delicious, but it's not really active at this point. Flickr and GovLoop are used informally, internally. We also use Yammer (like Twitter, but enterprise based). Staff use most of the other resources listed, but mostly not for work.*

*weebly & animoto*

*FourSquare*

*Pandorabots/SitePal for our artificially intelligent virtual agent.*

*We use Diigo and Goodreads instead of del.icio.us and Library Thing*

*Gaia, Shelfari, Podomatic, BookBundlz*

*GovDelivery*

*LibraryH3lp*

*Google chat IM*

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A last open-ended comment option was provided for respondents. Below are selected comments:

*The only other comment I have is that libraries seem to spend an awful lot of time on social networking/Web 2.0 services, but I've yet to see any really impacting success stories. I'm wondering, after these 5-6 years or so, why we still bother. Mobile services are probably going to make a bigger splash in the future, and I think that should be our focus.*

*I find the tools are only as effective as the user. Oftentimes, staffs can't support full time staff members requiring many people to do the job of*

*one person and spreading out the notion of core PR tasks- this fact lessens the overall marketing impact.*

*While the library has a presence on Facebook, according to Town policy, we are forbidden to access it. Facebook is blocked from Town computers.*

*More of our students are tweeting and using social media. The younger ones view email as antiquated, so we message them more and more on Facebook.*

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*The building community part is the most important! It makes people feel more positively towards the library and want to participate there and advocate for the library. Some of the most popular FB entries, for example, are "overheard at the library: a ten year old boy said, "I love books"!" etc. etc.*

# Summary

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These survey responses show an overall increase in last year's survey responses. Social media and Web 2.0 applications and tools are increasingly being used by U.S. libraries of all types. The majority of open-ended responses illustrate the growing need for libraries to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to using these popular tools to effectively communicate with their current and potential users.

While some respondents stated their local government or organizations restrict usage of social media tools, the majority of respondents appear to be using a more wide variety of applications to connect with customers.

We must remember that social media and Web 2.0 tools are freely available communications tools, yet take time and continued use to make them effective.

When searching for statistical data to support the growing use of social media tools, MarketingCharts.com provided links to many useful reports and studies. Library staff members responsible for promotion and communication can subscribe to this web site to keep up with growing trends in this and related areas. Listed below are some references to recent reports and studies that support the need for libraries to put these ever-changing communication tools to use:

- *Social media is not making users less social, despite popular contrary opinion, according to a new white paper from ExactTarget and CoTweet.*<sup>4</sup>
- *We must continue to move in emerging areas such as mobile applications. Smartphones showed an increasing presence in the US mobile device market in October 2010, according to the latest Millennial Media Mobile MIX report.*<sup>5</sup>
- *The number of mobile applications developed by advertisers/marketers in 2010 increased significantly year-over-year, according to a new report from Millennial Media.*<sup>6</sup>
- *Each year, surveys have shown increases in how social media and Web 2.0 applications are being used. Americans are most likely to use online social networks, according to a new study from the Pew Global Attitudes Project. Among the 22 publics surveyed, Americans most often say they use websites like Facebook and MySpace: 46% use such sites, 36% use the internet, but do not access these sites, and 18% say they never go online.*<sup>7</sup>

We hope this survey report assists libraries that are using social media and Web 2.0 tools to make better decisions about their continued use. It also is our hope this report assists libraries that are still not using these tools make the case for exploring the unlimited communication possibilities these tools can afford.

# Resources

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1. "1 in 10 Adult Web Users Tweets." *MarketingCharts: Charts and Data for Marketers in Web and Excel Format*. Web. 21 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.marketingcharts.com/direct/1-in-10-adult-web-users-tweets-15305/>>.
2. "Facebook Growth Dramatically Outpaces Other SocNets." *MarketingCharts: Charts and Data for Marketers in Web and Excel Format*. Web. 21 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.marketingcharts.com/direct/facebook-growth-dramatically-outpaces-other-socnets-15077/>>.
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4. "New Research Dispels Interactive Marketing Myths, Social Media Drives Face-to-Face Interactions." *Social Media & Email Marketing Software & Services | ExactTarget*. Web. 21 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.exacttarget.com/company/news/Article-View/ArticleId/432/New-Research-Dispels-Interactive-Marketing-Myths-Social-Media-Drives-Face-to-Face-Interactions.aspx>>.
5. "Smartphone Popularity Increases." *MarketingCharts: Charts and Data for Marketers in Web and Excel Format*. Web. 21 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.marketingcharts.com/direct/smartphone-popularity-increases-15134/>>.
6. "Mobile App Development Grows Sharply." *MarketingCharts: Charts and Data for Marketers in Web and Excel Format*. Web. 21 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.marketingcharts.com/direct/mobile-app-development-grows-sharply-14894/>>.
7. "Global Publics Embrace Social Networking." *Pew Research Center*. Web. 21 Dec. 2010. <<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1830/social-networking-computer-cell-phone-usage-around-the-world>>.